



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Director of Health Services

At its meeting held April 29, 2003, the Board took the following action:

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The following item was called up for consideration:

Supervisor Knabe's recommendation to instruct the Directors of Health Services and Public Health, in close consultation with the County Office of Small Business, to take the following actions relating to the public health issue of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); and report back to the Board in three weeks, as a set Board Agenda item, with the progress and recommendations:

Convene and participate in a Business and Health Advisory Task Force on SARS with representatives to include business, health, and media which should include strong Asian and Pacific American representation, and other County organizations and local governments, as necessary; and

Guide and assist the Task Force in developing a broad-based effort to accurately inform people about SARS in the County, including information on how people can protect themselves while avoiding false information and overreaction.

Supervisor Knabe made the following revised statement:

"Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) has become a worldwide public health concern. Fortunately, Los Angeles County has only eleven probable cases and none are life threatening.

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“A second significant threat is the irrational fear the general public has concerning SARS. Recent newspaper articles have reported unfounded rumors about SARS throughout the County. These false rumors unnecessarily raise the anxiety level and harm our local economy. This is especially true in the Asian and Pacific American communities, businesses, and the County’s travel and tourist industry.

“This County has a responsibility to deal with both threats: SARS as a public health issue and the irrational fear surrounding this illness. Both obligations are best met by making sure that accurate and complete information reaches and is understood by County residents, of all languages and backgrounds.”

Therefore, Supervisor Knabe made a motion that the Board instruct the Directors of Health Services and Public Health, in close consultation with the County Office of Small Business, to take the following actions:

1. Convene and participate in a Business and Health Advisory Task Force on SARS with representatives to include business, health, and media which should include strong Asian and Pacific American representation, and other County organizations and local governments, as necessary;
2. Guide and assist the Task Force in developing a broad-based effort to accurately inform people about SARS in the County, including information on how people can protect themselves while avoiding false information and overreaction; and
3. Report back to the Board at the meeting of May 13, 2003 at 11:00 a.m., regarding the Task Force’s membership, work plan, hours of County staff support required for the project, progress to date, and target date for the Task Force to complete its work and disband.

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Barry Sedlik addressed the Board.

Supervisor Yaroslavsky made the following statement:

“Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a new and developing epidemic. Its ultimate impact on the health of the population is unknown. The outcome of the SARS epidemic will be largely dependent on the effectiveness of efforts by public health agencies around the world to control its spread and treat its victims.

“So far, only nine cases of SARS (5 probable, 4 suspected) have been diagnosed in Los Angeles County. However, we should be prepared for the possibility that our community may be hit with a widespread outbreak of this disease. While our public health staff is working to prevent the escalation of SARS in Los Angeles County, we must also have contingency plans in place to respond to a worst-case scenario epidemic.”

After discussion, Supervisor Yaroslavsky made a suggestion that Supervisor Knabe's motion be amended to instruct the Directors of Health Services and Public Health to include in their report back to the Board in two weeks a report on the SARS epidemic and its potential impact on Los Angeles County, with report to include plan of action to respond to SARS in Los Angeles County, including a plan for system-wide response to a worst-case scenario epidemic.

Supervisor Knabe's motion, as amended, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, was unanimously carried.

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